

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on LHHSED
Committee on Appropriations
2358-B Rayburn HOB
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on LHHSED
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider the difficult and important work of appropriating public resources for the Labor, Health, Human Services and Education Subcommittee, we urge you to include \$375,000,000 for the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). At a time where 65% of jobs will require some postsecondary training, ensuring that students are prepared for and succeed in higher education is essential for our nation's economic, civic, and social wellbeing. Yet for far too many students, postsecondary education remains out of reach. This cost-effective college readiness program has helped millions of low-income students progress on the pathway to college and build a more stable future for themselves, their communities and our nation. In fact, the New America Foundation, in their *Rebalancing Resources and Incentives in Federal Student Aid* report, called GEAR UP the "most promising" program "aimed at raising the college aspirations and improving the academic preparation of disadvantaged students" and called for "triple funding for GEAR UP."

Recent data shared by the U.S. Department of Education affirms the impact that the program is having, with GEAR UP high school graduates enrolling immediately into postsecondary education at rates substantially higher (77.3% in 2014) than the national average for low-income students (45.5% in 2013). The GEAR UP program is truly a locally-driven, highly flexible model for closing achievement gaps and creating opportunity.

Given GEAR UP's success, it's no surprise that it has become an exceptionally competitive grant program, with many near-perfect grant applications being turned away. An appropriation of \$375,000,000 would allow the U.S. Department of Education to better meet the needs of communities nationwide and would bring an estimated 70,000 additional students into the program. GEAR UP has demonstrated tremendous success with students across a diverse range of backgrounds in large cities, rural areas, and everywhere in between, and is currently active in 44 states across the nation. The proven model starts early in low-income middle schools and follows students through high school and into their first year of college. By incorporating scholarship funds, expanding access to rigorous academic courses, tutoring, mentoring, financial

literacy, and intensive college and career planning, GEAR UP builds college-going cultures in schools where even high school graduation cannot be taken for granted. At a time of tight budgets, we have to invest every dollar responsibly. GEAR UP's proven track record, as well as its critical role in building our economy, makes it a truly worthwhile investment.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



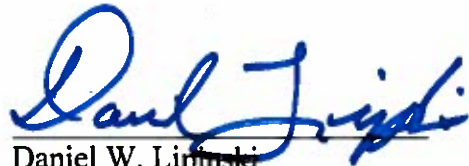
Raúl M. Grijalva
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Bobby L. Rush
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Terri A. Sewell
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Daniel W. Lipinski
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